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Chairman: Mr. Margarian (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Armenia)

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In the absence of Mr. Majoor (Netherlands), Mr. Margarian (Armenia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 56: Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/C.3/63/L.14)

(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) (A/C.3/63/L.12 and L.15)

Draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.12: Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women

1. **Ms. Samson** (Netherlands), introducing draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.12 also on behalf of Belgium, said that Armenia, Austria, Benin, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Luxembourg, Paraguay, Peru, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland had joined the sponsors. Despite the activities undertaken by Member States to end violence against women, a culture of tolerance and impunity for such acts of violence continued to exist around the world. Therefore, the draft resolution focused on ending impunity and the culture of tolerance towards violence against women and urged Member States to adopt a comprehensive and sustained approach towards reaching that goal. A number of best practices were proposed for Member States to use in their efforts to eliminate violence against women.

2. **Mr. Gustafik** (Deputy Secretary) said that Bhutan, Brazil, the Congo, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Haiti, Mozambique, Nigeria, Slovakia, Switzerland and the United Republic of Tanzania had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

Draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.14: Future operation of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

3. **Ms. Akbar** (Antigua and Barbuda), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.14. The draft resolution recalled Economic and Social Council resolution 2007/37, in which the Council had reaffirmed the mandate of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) to conduct research and training for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The text acknowledged the contributions that INSTRAW had made to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and its role in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women through its research and training outputs involving national gender machineries, academic institutes, regional intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.15: Supporting efforts to end obstetric fistula

4. **Ms. Sow** (Senegal) introducing draft resolution A/C.3/63/L.15, said that Argentina, Armenia, the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Canada, the Congo, Honduras, Liberia, Mauritius, Mongolia, Norway, Peru, Poland, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Togo, Turkey and Zimbabwe had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

5. Progress towards achieving Millennium Development Goal 5, improving maternal health, was slower than with regard to any of the other Goals. Over half a million women died in childbirth annually. One woman in Africa or Asia died every minute from complications during pregnancy, and for every woman who died, some 20 others were injured or disabled. Obstetric fistula was a major cause of that situation in many developing countries. Its victims were generally poor, illiterate women in areas where sexual discrimination was widespread and access to health care very limited.

6. While her country welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on supporting efforts to end obstetric fistula (A/63/222), it noted that that report had been submitted later than the other reports of the Secretary-General under agenda item 56. As a result, there had been no discussion of the issue. It was hoped that in future the report on that issue would be submitted together with the other reports. The draft resolution incorporated relevant recommendations from the Secretary-General's report, while remaining largely unchanged from the previous year. The United Nations Population Fund was to be commended for its work to end obstetric fistula.

7. **Mr. Gustafik** (Deputy Secretary of the Committee) said that Benin, Brazil, Chile, the

Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti, Lesotho, Monaco, the Republic of Moldova and Sri Lanka had also joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

Agenda item 64: Promotion and protection of human rights (*continued*) (A/63/123, A/63/281-S/2008/431 and A/63/370-S/2008/614)

(d) Comprehensive implementation of and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (*continued*) (A/63/36 and A/C.3/63/3)

8. **Mr. Ebner** (Austria) said that his country aligned itself with the statement made by France on behalf of the European Union. In August, 2008, the Government of Austria had hosted a conference at which the global human rights community had been broadly represented, to mark the fifteenth anniversary of the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna. A main purpose of the conference had been to assess the status of implementation of international human rights standards at the local level. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action had had a significant impact on the development of human rights standards, including the adoption of new instruments and declarations and the setting up of new mechanisms. The establishment of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights had been one of the milestones of the Vienna World Conference in 1993.

9. The recent commemorative conference had concluded that the existing human rights framework was good and should not be brought into question. The biggest challenge currently in human rights lay in the gap between standards and their implementation on the ground. Recommendations put forward by the conference to bridge that gap included strengthening efforts towards the universal ratification of all major human rights treaties and their effective incorporation by States into domestic law; improving human rights education and access to justice for victims of violations; full cooperation with international human rights monitoring bodies; stronger engagement on the part of local stakeholders in United Nations and regional human rights procedures to increase local ownership for follow-up; and enhanced cooperation between United Nations human rights mechanisms and regional human rights mechanisms.

10. **Ms. Mwaipopo** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that her country was party to the core United Nations and African Union human rights instruments. In the past two years, it had submitted for consideration four country reports under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Government was currently preparing its country report under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Despite the significant recent progress in carrying out its treaty reporting obligations, her country faced constraints in human and financial resources. In that context, international cooperation was important to assist developing nations in fulfilling their treaty obligations.

11. Her country welcomed the establishment of the universal periodic review mechanism within the Human Rights Council and had agreed to undergo a review in 2011. The national preparation process would benefit from technical assistance. The review process should not duplicate existing mechanisms, but rather should ensure that States received fair assessments of their progress or failure in implementing human rights.

12. As part of the year-long commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania had declared 10 December National Human Rights Day. A range of activities aiming to disseminate as widely as possible the message of the Universal Declaration and promote the importance of respect for human rights had been planned to mark the day.

13. Fifteen years after its adoption, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, with its recognition of all human rights as inherent, universal, indivisible and interdependent, remained a basis for human rights work internationally, regionally and locally. Her Government continued to implement the Vienna Declaration and had established an independent body to promote and protect the human rights of the population. The anniversary provided an opportunity to renew the commitment to the Special Procedures of the Commission on Human Rights set up under the Vienna Declaration and also to underscore the right to development as a universal and inalienable right. In order for that right to be realized, further efforts by the international community were required.

14. **Mr. Emadi** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that in the six decades since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 15 years since the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, most human rights concerns had remained unmet. In response to an appeal by the High Commissioner encouraging Member States to mark the sixtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration, the Islamic Republic of Iran had decided to make a voluntary contribution to the organization of a seminar on human rights and cultural diversity to be held in Geneva in the near future.

15. His country cooperated on human rights issues with member States of the Non-Aligned Movement and members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, and had proposed that 5 August should be designated Islamic Human Rights and Human Dignity Day. That proposal had recently been adopted by the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. His country also hosted the Non-Aligned Movement Centre for Human Rights and Cultural Diversity.

16. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action had placed particular emphasis on the right to development as a crucial component of human rights. However, barriers to the realization of development which were still in place meant that that goal would not be achieved in the foreseeable future. Lastly, the Declaration paid particular attention to the regional, cultural and historical background of each Member State in dealing with human rights along with the principle of the universality of human rights.

17. **Ms. Halabi** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that human rights had to be understood in the context of the particular experiences and customs of each nation and civilization. Fundamental human rights were therefore unitary, but were also underscored by various particularities. The international community should have a comprehensive and even-handed approach to human rights, taking into consideration the national, regional, historical, cultural and religious particularities of each country. The Constitution of the Syrian Arab Republic ensured the right of citizens to enjoy their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Her country was party to over 17 relevant international instruments, including the seven core human rights treaties.

18. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights provided that everyone, without distinction of any kind, was entitled to the human rights set forth therein. However, the politicization of humanitarian work and the prevailing political climate determined where loans and aid were directed. Such assistance had often been made conditional on political, economic or social reform, as a means to gain political concessions. Many States deserving such loans or aid had been denied them.

19. The previous two centuries had witnessed rapid global changes, with mixed results. Despite scientific progress, local and international conflict continued to cause humanitarian disasters and crimes. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action had established measures to protect the human rights of those living under foreign occupation, which was in itself a serious violation of human rights. The international community should ensure respect of human rights without double standards, prioritizing the violations that had the most serious and widespread impact, such as foreign occupation.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.